Male Victims

Victim Advocate Training

Block Objectives

- Learn the distinctions between sexual victimization of men and women
- Adequate understanding of the male victim's experience to provide appropriate support to the male victim

Revealing the Gap

Existing Data:

- Prison studies of men
- Studies of boys and teens
- Hate crimes victims

The Gap:

- Non-incarcerated adult male sexual assault victims are not part of the large studies

Prevalence of Sexual Assault in Adult Men

- Small sample size, limited number of studies
  - Non-replicated data
  - Different methodologies
- 7.2% of adult men sexually assaulted after 15 yrs. of age
- 16% of men sexually assaulted in a college sample

Prevalence Data

How common is sexual assault of males?

Community Studies

2004 national study: 3.8% sexually assaulted[1]

2000 national study: 3.0% sexually assaulted[2]

1987 LA area study: 7% sexually assaulted[3]

Prevalence Data

How common is sexual assault of males?

Prison Studies

Nebraska state prison: 22% sexually assaulted[1]

7 Midwestern prisons: 21% sexually assaulted[2]

3 Oklahoma jails: 14% sexually assaulted[3]

Kentucky max security: 18% sexually

Prevalence Data

How common is sexual assault of males?

Prison Studies

Extrapolating the data:

- **5% of all U.S. men will spend time in prison (this does not include % who go to jail)**
- **7.5 million men have been in prison**
- **20% of 7.5 million = 1.5 million men who have been raped in prison**

Prevalence Data

Are men as likely as women to disclose?

NO

<u>Widom & Morris</u>: 58% of men with *documented* histories of sexual abuse denied any such history

Assault Profiles

- Caveats
  - Non replicated data
  - Different methodologies
- Tentative profiles
  - Gang sexual assaults more likely with male victims
  - Weapons more likely with male victims
  - Greater levels of force used
  - Injuries in 25%-60% of male victims
  - Inconsistent data about whether acquaintance or stranger assaults more prevalent
  - Vast majority of assailants are heterosexual

Sexual Assault Facts

Don’t men always want sex?

Why do we think that?

What does that do to male victims?

Sexual Assault Facts

If a man gets an erection or experiences an orgasm during a sexual assault-is that consent? Does that mean he wanted it?

No.

Males can respond physically to stimulation (get an erection) even in traumatic or painful sexual situations.

Consequences

- Feel betrayed by penis
- Feel confused, does mean enjoyed it?

Sexual Assault Facts

Who are the sexual assault offenders of male victims?

Are most of these men homosexual?

Sexual Assault Facts

Does a man get sexually assaulted because another man senses he is gay?

Does being sexually assaulted as a child or as an adult make someone gay?

Sexual Assault Facts

Can a woman sexually assault a man?

Yes.

How?

- Threats
- Use of alcohol/drugs
- Use of weapon
- Tying him down

Help-Seeking

- Lower rates of help-seeking than female victims
- Male victims are 1%-10% of the victims seeking help from Crisis Centers and medical facilities
- Barriers to help-seeking
  - Stigma
  - Shame
  - Don’t know about services available

System Response

- Stereotyping of victims
  - Misperception that male victims are all gay
  - Disbelieve that it happens to men
- Lack of services
  - Known gender differences in individual victims' reactions
  - Services designed only for women
    - Less than 5% of programs have services for men
  - Denial of access to services

Reporting to Law Enforcement

- 5%-10% of sexual assault victims reporting to law enforcement are men
- Barriers to reporting
  - Social
    - Feminization of sexual violence
    - Masculinization of invulnerability
  - Individual
    - Internalized social attitudes
    - Too costly in self-esteem losses and social status losses

Social Context

- Myths
  - A man can not be forced into sexual contact unless he wants to be
  - If a man is sexually assaulted by another man he must be gay
  - Sexual assault affects male victims less than it does women
  - Men always want sex
  - A woman can’t rape a man

The Individual Victim's Experience

- If the victim has adopted these myths as truths
  - Confusion over fault for the sexual assault
  - Self doubt about sexuality
  - Anger about the assailant's power to put him into this confusion

The Individual Victim's Experience

- If the victim interacts with system professionals who have adopted these myths
  - At best, confusion at his disclosure and his needs
  - At worst, negative reaction affirming his worst fears and denying services

Meanings for Male Victims

- Same spectrum of meaning as women
  - Except not misogyny
- Additional meanings
  - Imposition of homosexual sexual identity
  - Attack on core masculinity
- Masculinity and the military
- Military team and cohesion

Masculinity

- Strength
- Powerful
- Fearless
- Suppress emotion
- Invulnerable
- Suppress pain
- Warrior
- Provider

Attack on Masculinity

- Weakness
- Powerlessness
- Fear
- Intense emotional pain
- Vulnerability
- Attacked/Defeated

Masculinity and Recovery

- Needing support
- Unable to actively seek help
- Unable to fully experience the emotional content (needed for recovery)

Responses To Assault on Masculinity

- Resignation to being not masculine
- Challenge masculinity's norms
  - Attempts to forge a personalized gender identity
- Hyper-masculinity
  - Emotionally constricted (except anger)
  - At risk for violence perpetration

Responses to Sexual Assault

- Shock
- Humiliation
- Embarrassment
- Behavior changes
- Phobias (assault related)
- Rage
- Confusion / disorientation
- Fear of “going crazy”

Long-term Responses to Sexual Assault

- Anger
- Irritability
- Decreased self-esteem
- Sexual problems
- Depression*
- Hostility*
- Substance Abuse
- Isolation/Withdrawal

*at higher levels than female victims

The Impact of Sexual Assault on Male Victims

The Symptoms: Male-Specific

- Intense shame & humiliation
- Terror of emasculation & plunge in self-esteem
- Intense questioning of gender & even sexual identity
- Self-blame about failure to resist

Complexities with Male

- High rate of prior trauma
  - 25%-60% childhood abuse of some form
- Higher rate of PTSD
  - Almost 50% qualify for diagnosis
- High rates of disability
  - Vulnerability in one area may lead to vulnerability to victimization

Particular Complexities with Male Victimization

- Substance abuse may ease the conflict with traditional masculinity
  - Alcohol or drugs numb the overwhelming emotions from the assault
  - Numbing the emotional flooding causes it to stay potent for longer periods

Complexities with Male

- Violence does not conflict with traditional masculinity
  - Hostility and anger may be turned inward in the form of suicidal thoughts or suicide attempts
  - Violence may take the form of seizing power as a perpetrator
- Sexuality Concerns
- Reckless Behavior

Helping Strategies

- Normalizing feelings of victimization
- Proactively addressing substance abuse
- Assessing for suicidal thoughts
- Support group referrals
- www.malesurvivor.org

Key Points

- The research on adult male victimization is limited
- Male victims seek assistance less than female victims
- Male victims often report that the sexual assault causes confusion about sexuality and it challenges their identity as masculine
- Traditional masculinity inhibits the ability to seek help and experience the emotional content of the assault

Key Points

- Male victims are at risk for suicide
- Substance abuse is a concern for male victims
- Helping strategies should focus on normalizing feelings and finding support, particularly the support of other male victims

References

- Donelly, D., and Kenyon, S. “Honey, We Don’t Do Men”, Journal of Interpersonal Violence, Vol. 11, No. 3, Sept. 1996, 441-448.
- Sterman, L., Del Bove, G., and Addison, M., “Stranger and Acquaintance Sexual Assault of Adult Males”, Journal of Interpersonal Violence, Vol. 19, No. 8, Aug. 2004, 901-915.
- Lisak, D. “Male Victims of Sexual Assault”, Presentation given to New Mexico Coordinators of Sexual Assault Programs, Albuquerque, NM, August 2004.

Prevalence Data

Community Studies: References

1: Elliot, D.M., & Briere, J. (2004). Adult sexual assault: Prevalence, symptomatology, and sex differences in the general population. *Journal of Traumatic Stress. 17(3),* 203-211.

2: Tjaden, P. & Thoennes, N. (2000). Full Report of the Prevalence, Incidence, and Consequences of Violence Against Women (NCJ 183781). National Institute of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Washington, DC.

3. Sorenson, S., et al., (1987). The prevalence of adult sexual assault: The Los Angeles Epidemiologic Catchment Area Project. *American Journal of Epidemiology, 126,* 1154-1164.

Prevalence Data

Prison Studies: References

1: Struckman-Johnson, C., Struckman-Johnson, D., Rucker, L., Bumby, K., Donaldson, S. (1996). Sexual coercion reported by men and women in prison. *Journal of Sex Research, 33,* 67-76.

2: Struckman-Johnson, C., Struckman-Johnson, D., (2000). Sexual coercion rates in seven midwestern prison facilities for men. *The Prison Journal, 80,* 379-390.

3: Hensley, C., Tewksbury, R., & Castle, T. (2003). Characteristics of prison sexual assault targets in male Oklahoma correctional facilities. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 18,* 595-606.

4: Hensley, C., Koscheski, M., & Tewksbury, R., (2005). Examining the characteristics of male sexual assault targets in a southern maximum security prison. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 20,* 667-679.